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SUBJECT: HANSSSEN-BAUER RETURNS EMPTY HANDED FROM
KILINOCHCHI; CO-CHAIR AMBASSADORS RECOMMEND CO-CHAIR
CONFERENCE CALL THE WEEK OF DECEMBER 11 TO DISCUSS NEXT
STEPS

Classified By: Ambassador Robert O. Blake, Jr. for reasons
1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: In a readout to Co-Chair Ambassadors the evening of December 8, Norwegian Special Envoy Jon Hanssen-Bauer reported that the LTTE had refused all four initiatives proposed the Government of Sri Lanka, including the idea of holding peace talks as soon as possible. The LTTE responded they have little faith in the international community, the Norwegian facilitation effort or the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission since none of these have been able to keep the GSL to the commitments it has made. Hanssen-Bauer characterized the impasse as a major crisis. Co-Chair Ambassadors agreed to recommend that Washington convene a Co-Chair conference call the week of December 11 to discuss next steps. End Summary.

LTTE Stiffs Norwegians on Four Proposals

¶2. (C) Hanssen-Bauer briefed that the GSL had asked him to convey four proposals to the LTTE: 1) the GSL seeks LTTE agreement to open the A-9 road for a one-time humanitarian convoy; 2) the GSL would like the LTTE to stop intimidating private retail shop owners in Jaffna so they can open for business and help relieve the food distribution problem; 3) the GSL wants the LTTE to cooperate in creating a safehaven for internally displaced persons in the Vakarai area; and 4) the GSL would like to resume peace talks as soon as possible, conceivably as early as late December.

¶3. (C) Hanssen-Bauer said his LTTE interlocutors rejected all four proposals. They told the Special Envoy they have little faith in the international community, the Norwegian facilitation effort or the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission since none of these have been able to keep the GSL to the

commitments it has made. They complained that the political path had achieved nothing. They insisted the sequence for any resumption of talks must be that all violence should cease since it is impossible to hold talks while the cease-fire agreement is being violated. Hanssen-Bauer said he pressed the LTTE on the A-9 opening, but the LTTE doggedly insisted they would only accept a complete reopening. On the Vakarai safehaven, the LTTE had no substantive comment except to complain about the "GSL military offensive" there. Hanssen-Bauer drew the LTTE's attention to the completion of the Expert Committee Reports on power-sharing proposals (septel) as a positive step forward. The LTTE had no response. Instead, Hassen-Bauer said, the LTTE kept coming back to the need for a cease-fire and normalcy before talks could begin.

What Next?

¶4. (C) Hanssen-Bauer related that he pointedly told the LTTE there was no point in him shuttling back and forth to Kilinochchi if such visits were not going to produce any positive results or a way forward. He told them he can't take initiatives unless the two sides are ready for such initiatives.

¶5. (C) On his return to Colombo, Hanssen-Bauer briefed Peace Secretariat Director Kohona on the results of his talks with the LTTE. Kohona immediately responded that the Government is ready for a ceasefire. Hanssen-Bauer responded that he had heard from other well-placed GSL officials that this was not so and that in fact the Sri Lankan military wanted to press its military advantage. He told Kohona he

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would need assurances from the highest levels of the military establishment that the military is ready for a true ceasefire before Norway will take such assurances back to the LTTE.

¶6. (C) In the ensuing discussion among the Co-Chair Ambassadors, opinions were divided. EU Head of Mission Wilson opined that whatever Kohona may say, the GSL is not ready for a real ceasefire. The GSL's objective, he maintained, is to take advantage of the Supreme Court demerger decision to "pacify" the east, wipe out the LTTE there and force all their personnel operations to the north. He suggested that perhaps the Co-Chairs should consider an ultimatum such as that issued by key Western leaders in Bosnia to the effect "We do not believe either of you are serious. When you are ready to engage seriously, you have our number." The German Ambassador agreed and wondered whether all Co-Chair Ambassadors should be recalled for consultations. The Japanese Ambassador had already departed by that point for another engagement.

¶7. (C) Ambassador responded that he did not believe the situation had deteriorated to the point where Bosnia-like measures should be considered. Nor should Ambassadors be recalled. The Government had offered a ceasefire. The Co-Chairs should take them at their word by getting the President to reaffirm the GSL is indeed ready for a true ceasefire. A Co-Chair decision to check out of the process now would only encourage further fighting and the loss of many more innocent lives. Co-Chair Ambassadors finally agreed the situation was serious enough to warrant a discussion by Co-Chair capitals. Ambassador undertook to suggest that Washington convene a conference call in the middle or later part of the week of December 11 to discuss next steps.

Comment and Action Request

¶8. (C) Ambassador recommends that U/S Burns or A/S Boucher agree to convene the recommended call. While the situation is indeed very serious on many fronts, we still have a small

opening to get the President to commit to a real ceasefire. If he does, and the LTTE reciprocates, we can thereby give a chance to the power-sharing process to succeed. The Experts Committee has done its job by coming up with two very detailed and far-reaching power-sharing proposals that will now be discussed and debated with the All Parties Committee. Ambassador will meet with the head of that Committee on December 11 to hear his gameplan and urge rapid progress.

BLAKE